

Marine Safety Office Houston-Galveston
Marine Safety Unit Galveston
Vessel Traffic Service Houston

***Marine Safety Information Bulletin 07-04
Implementation Period for ISPS/MTSA
Requirements***

April 8, 2004

April 1, 2004 marked the 3-month milestone before full implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code for vessels on international routes; and the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) regulations for vessels operating exclusively in the United States, or operating in the United States in conjunction with their international operations under the ISPS code. The following information is provided to vessel operators to assist with their implementation efforts during this time period.

After July 1, 2004, no foreign-flagged vessel will be authorized entry into U. S. waters without a valid International Ship Security Certificate (ISSC). Vessels that hold a valid ISSC will be required to undergo a U. S. Coast Guard ISPS/MTSA verification exam at the first U. S. port of entry after July 1, 2004. Foreign vessels less than 500 gross tons operating in U. S. waters will be required to hold a Coast Guard approved Vessel Security Plan (VSP), Alternate Security program, or be operating under an approved bilateral agreement between the United States and the vessel's flag administration. U.S. vessels operating on international voyages must have an ISSC issued prior to July 1, 2004 to continue operating.

To ensure delays due to ISPS/MTSA implementation are minimized, the following scheduling information is provided:

For U. S. vessels operating internationally:

Prior to July 1, 2004, a verification exam must be scheduled with the Coast Guard to verify full implementation of the approved Vessel Security Plan.

- Prior to July 1, 2004, for those U. S. vessels operating on international voyages, with a VSP that has not yet been approved, a verification exam may be requested using the *submitted* VSP. The ISSC will be issued upon approval of the VSP, if any modifications required are minor in nature. Major changes will require a follow-up verification before issuance of the ISSC.

For foreign-flagged vessel operating in U. S. waters:

All vessels holding ISSC's must undergo a Coast Guard verification exam after July 1, 2004.

- For those vessels that are issued an ISSC *before* July 1, 2004, operators are *highly encouraged* to request a verification exam at the earliest opportunity, as they may face delays. After July 1, 2004 a large number of vessels will be requesting verification exams, and exams will be conducted on a first-come, first-served basis.

For U. S. vessels operating on domestic routes:

- The verification exam to verify implementation of the approved VSP will be scheduled in concert with the vessel's annual inspection.

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